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Croquet.

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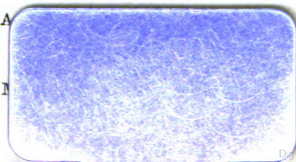
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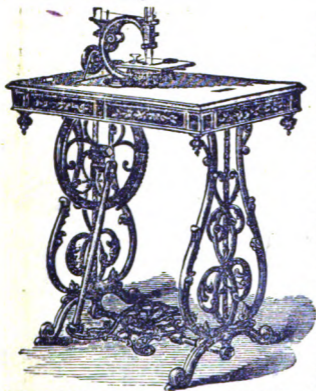
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HAND-BOOK OF CROQUET.

CASSELL'S SIXPENNY HAND-BOOKS.

THE GAME
OF
CROQUET.

LONDON:
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HAND-BOOK

TO THE

GAME OF CROQUET.

“ Some get by *knocks*, and so advance
Their fortune by a boisterous aim ;
And some who have the sweetest chance,
Their enemies hit, and win the game.
The fairest casts are those that owe
No thanks to fortune's giddy sway ;
Such honest men good bowlers are
Whose own true bias cuts the way.”

ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE GAME.

Most people have heard of the learned naturalist who, in a guide-book on Norway, with a separate chapter to everything, gave, as in duty bound, a whole chapter to the serpents—a chapter which consisted of these remarkable words: “There are no serpents in Norway.” The origin of Croquet is something like the

Norwegian serpents—there is nothing to say about it *as fact*; the origin of the game is really a point of *conjecture*. Various authorities have cited various authorities to prove and show on the one side; and various other authorities have cited still other authorities to prove and show on the other side. “Who shall decide when doctors disagree?”

“Stonehenge,” in his “British Rural Sports,” assumes the game to be of French origin, and this assumption is favoured by its title. “On the other hand,” says Captain Mayne Reil, “there is no French word that exactly answers to the signification of the typical term. The *croquette* of the *cuisine*, though plausibly approaching it, is not a satisfactory synonym. The verb *croquer* comes nearer, especially when employed, as it occasionally is, in the figurative sense of ‘crumpling up’ or destroying an antagonist; for the act of ‘croquet,’ as understood in the play, has something of this character. The derivation, however, is too far-fetched. Taking *croquer* in its common signification—to ‘crackle’ or make a crackling noise—we find a more plausible pretext for regarding it in the radix of the term ‘croquet;’ for there is no more characteristic feature of the game than the crackle of the balls heard during the pro-

gress of the play. This might reasonably enough have suggested the appellation. To contradict the idea of a French origin, however, and along with it the derivation of the name, we are met with the circumstance, that the game is but little known in France; and where played—as at Boulogne, Biarritz, and such places—it is chiefly by the English there sojourning!” Here the Captain, *the* great authority on Croquet, makes out a strong case, to show *what is not the origin of Croquet!*

Croquet has sometimes been ascribed to Italy, because probably it is occasionally played there; why not to British India, it is occasionally played there also?

The game of Croquet, or Roquet, was well known in Ireland many years ago—certainly before it was popular in France—but it may have made its way quickly across the Channel.

The following were the Irish rules for playing the game:—

1. The ball must be struck or pushed by the end of the mallet only.
2. The ring, or bridge, must on no account ever be moved to afford the player any convenience in playing.
3. After the player has passed his ball through a ring, he is entitled to another stroke; or after having roqueted another ball.
4. The player

can only roquet the same ball once until he again passes through a ring. 5. A ball half through a ring is to be considered as altogether through. 6. If a player misses a ring, he must return to the side of it that he played from, either through or around the ring, as most convenient. 7. A ball must not be lifted from the ground, if in the way of another player. If the ball of one player strikes that of another, which is not available for a roquet, both balls remain as sent; but if the ball is sent as available for a roquet, it must be roqueted. 8. A ball that has not been through the first ring cannot roquet, but it can be roqueted. 9. If a ball that has not passed through the first ring be sent behind the stick at the starting point, it can be brought up to the starting point and start afresh. 10. On striking the second stick, the player has the option of either leaving his ball wherever it may have glided to, or of bringing it back to the stick. 11. When intending to roquet another ball, the player should strike his own ball with commensurate force, in order to drive the ball about to be roqueted either into a favourable or unfavourable position. The player's ball must always be the one moved in roqueting. 12. If in roqueting the player's ball slips from

under his foot when he strikes it, it must be brought back to the place he struck it first.

There is a strong case made out, all resting on an old print, that Croquet was played in the Plantagenet period, and perhaps earlier.

In Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes," there is an engraving representing players engaged in a game which by some authorities have been associated with Ground Billiards, but which in reality bears a close resemblance to Croquet. There are the players; there are the mallets—only they are not mallets, but cudgels; there are the balls, and there is a horse-shoe bridge, at which the player is decidedly not bowling. Still there is enough to warrant the conjecture that Croquet, or something very like it, was known a long while ago, and *Croquet* "by any other name" is just as good.

Although this pastime, this Croquet, or fore-runner of Croquet, long died out in England, it continued to maintain existence in France. An Englishman resident in that country, upwards of forty years ago, thus describes a game which he had seen played there:—"Along the smooth and sandy but firm surface of the avenue was fixed a line of iron arches, terminating at either extremity with a pin or post of iron, and the game consisted in driving wooden balls with

wooden mallets from one end to the other, and back again; the fun of cannoning your adversary, and driving him out of his course, adding zest to the triumph of your skill, if you first reached the winning-post." A Manual of French Sports gives the following account of the game, therein termed the "*Jeu de mail*:"—

"This game, which is said to have been played by the Gauls, our ancestors, was so generally played in former years, that the greater portion of the promenades adjoining many of our towns consisted of a long avenue, termed the *mail*, because it was set apart for the *jeu de mail*. To this day it is still as much in vogue as ever in some of the towns in the centre of France, and in Montpellier it has never ceased to be a favourite amusement with all classes and all ages. The instrument termed the *mail* consists of a club of strong wood, made in the form of a cylinder, furnished at the two extremities with a tip or *ferule*, of iron, and in the middle of which is firmly fixed a handle about a yard long, not too stiff nor too pliant, but proportioned to the weight of the cylinder. The ball, which is struck with the club, is made of boxwood, very dry and firm."

Our readers who are acquainted with Croquet will see the great resemblance the game bears

to that here described, if not its actual identity.

The ancient proverb tells us that "there is nothing new under the sun." Croquet, although it is termed a new game, is an illustration of this truth. Croquet is, in fact, an old English game revived; but after so long a time as to be entirely new to the English of the present day, and with such alterations as to have left ample room for discussion as to its precise origin. But we believe it is now generally admitted that the game is, in the main, the same as the old pastime called "Pall Mall," from which a celebrated locality in London takes its name, the game having formerly been a favourite one in the adjacent park. The principal avenue in St. James's Park is still called "The Mall."

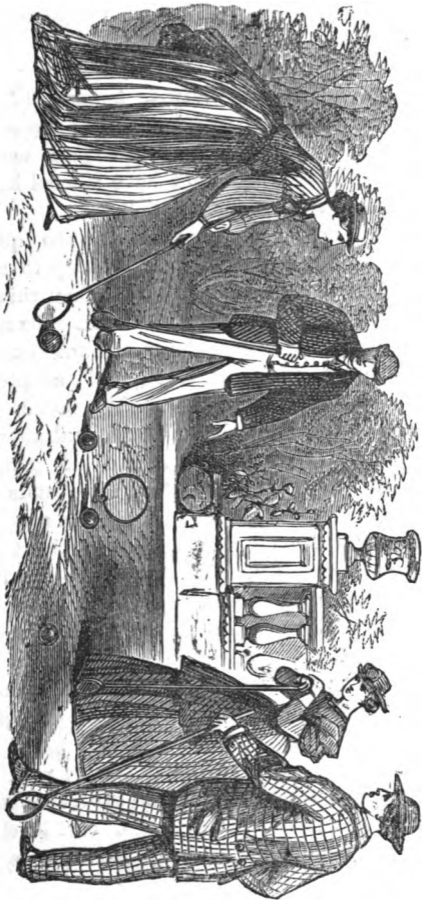
With regard to the implements used in the old English game of Mall, the author of the "Curiosities of London" tells us that—"In 1854 were found in the house of the late Mr. B. L. Vulliamy, No. 68, Pall Mall, a box containing four pairs of the mailes, or mallets, and one ball, such as were formerly used for playing the game of Pall Mall in the Mall of St. James's Park. Each maile is four feet long, and is made of lancewood; the head is slightly curved, and measures outwardly $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the inner

curve being $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The diameter of the maile ends is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, each shod with a thin iron hoop; the handle, which is very elastic, is bound with white leather to the breadth of two hands, and terminated with a collar of jagged leather. The ball is of boxwood, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. A pair of mailes and a ball have been presented to the British Museum by Mr. George Vulliamy."

Troco, or Lawn Billiards, long practised as an out-door game in this country, bears a strong resemblance to Croquet. It is played by any number of ladies or gentlemen, or both. The object—closely assimilated to that of Croquet—is the driving of a wooden ball through an iron ring. The ring, however, unlike the bridges in Croquet, moves on a pivot in a piece of wood driven into the ground in the centre of the circle. The wooden ball is lifted from the ground by a cue, or stick, at the end of which is an oval, spoon-like projection of iron. It is then thrown forward towards the ring, the object of the player being to pass his ball through.

Captain Mayne Reid says he has seen "played upon the plains of America, by men commonly called savages, a game so closely allied to Croquet that, with the exception of the players

TROCO, OR LAWN BILLIARDS.



being half-naked Indians, instead of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen, and the arena a boundless prairie instead of a park enclosed within palings, he might have fancied himself assisting at a Croquet party."

No out-door amusement has so quickly sprung into popularity, or is likely to retain its place as a general favourite, than this new game of Croquet. It is a game that suits nearly everybody, involves no large amount of trouble or expense, and, best of all, it is adapted to both sexes. It is thoroughly social, very amusing, no mean test of skill, and affording incitement to healthy exercise. A game in which brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, town and country cousins, friends both male and female, can engage without previous preparation, and spend two or three happy hours on the lawn or in the field, was almost unknown until within the last two or three years, when Croquet was brought forward to supply the vacant place. No wonder, then, that it is steadfastly increasing in practice and repute.

It is frequently supposed that a regularly arranged croquet-ground is an expensive affair, involving an elaborate system of turf levelling and preparation of surface; but this is not

necessarily the case, as an excellent game at Croquet can be played in any tolerably level field or on a common lawn. There are also many portions of our public parks which appear admirably suited in every way for affording facilities for this game; and there exists no reason why it should not become as popular as cricket. There are many who could join in a game at Croquet that would shrink from bowling a ball or keeping a wicket; doubtful of either their own strength or skill, they would decline even to fag out on the "tented plain;" but they would not hesitate about taking up the mallet. To ladies especially Croquet affords a pleasant and healthy means of recreation. At present, so far as the parks and other places of public resort are concerned, the "lords of creation" have managed to monopolise to themselves all the out-door games—a state of things which the introduction of Croquet into the list of popular pastimes would do much to rectify. Why, in London for instance, should there not be space set apart in Victoria, Battersea, and Kennington Parks, for good and well-kept croquet-grounds?

The game should be played on broad, smooth level patches, near clumps of trees, or ornamental shrubberies, so that the players may,

to some extent, be protected from the heat of the sun. At pic-nics, excursion parties, and other festive gatherings, Croquet might be introduced with advantage; the pleasure and profit of the day being thereby very much increased.

In our opinion, the proprietors of pleasure-grounds, and other similar places of public resort, would find the establishment of croquet-grounds exceedingly attractive.

INSTRUMENTS REQUIRED IN CROQUET.

THE BALLS.

CROQUET balls are generally manufactured of hard wood, and for this purpose beech is said to be the best. Some balls are made of gutta-percha, and fibre known as the "patent compound." But whatever be the material of which they are formed, their dimensions should not exceed ten inches in circumference, and nine inches is a common and a very convenient size. The balls are all painted of different colours—red, blue, yellow, purple, green, orange, white, and black. Some are painted in rings, some entirely covered with colour; this is really a matter of no importance, so long as the balls are sufficiently well marked to distinguish them from each other: every player *must* know his own ball.

BRIDGES.

The hoops, or arches, often called bridges, are nine or ten in number. They are made of

strong iron wire. Some of them are round, some of them square at the top. They should be about twelve inches in width, and should stand about twelve inches out of the ground. They may be either painted or plain; those which are galvanised or japanned are the best, and being white, are easily seen in the dusk.

CLIPS.

Each player should be provided with a croquet-clip. The croquet-clip is a double



THE CLIPS.

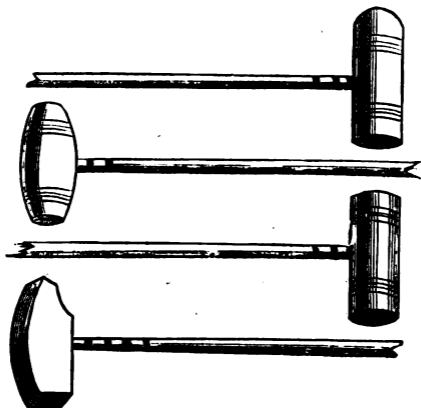
metal marker, joined at the top, and is used to show the progress of the game. On one side of the clip there is a spot of colour, corresponding to the colour of the player's ball. The mark indicates the direction in which

the player is going, and the clip is hung over the hoop, as indicated in the engraving.

THE MALLETS.

The mallets employed in Croquet are of various kinds. The pattern is a matter of

taste, but the height and weight *must* be proportional to the player. For all ordinary purposes, and full-grown players, the mallets should have handles of about two and a-half feet in length. They should be of convenient



THE MALLETS.

size, to grasp with the hand. The mallet should be firmly screwed, not nailed, to the handle. One face of the mallet should be convex, and the other flat. The handles are generally painted with rings of colours. The

colours should correspond with those of the balls.

Most of the mallets sold by the manufacturers have handles more than three feet long. These handles will be found very inconvenient; indeed, in the opinion of some players, two feet and a half is too great a length—two feet is quite long enough.

STAKES, PEGS, OR POINTS.

Two slips of wood, about the size of a cricket-stump, are used in Croquet. They are called "stakes," "pegs," or "points." One is stuck at one end of the ground, and one at the other. One, from which the players begin their game, is called the Starting-point, or Starting-peg; the other, from which the players begin their "homeward" journey, is called the Turning-point, or Turning-peg. The points or pegs are painted in rings of colour corresponding to the colours of the balls.

The use of clips precludes the necessity of replying, or of refusing to reply, to any question as to the bridges that have or have not been passed. If clips are not used, it is incumbent on a player, if challenged, to name his hoop.

A complete Croquet set consists of

8 Balls.		10 Bridges.
8 Mallets.		8 Clips.
2 Pegs.		

They can be obtained in most provincial towns, but it is sometimes difficult to get them of thoroughly seasoned wood. Messrs. Parkins and Gotto, of Oxford Street, supply excellent balls, mallets, &c., at a low tariff, and pay the carriage to any railway station in England. They supply a strong and useful full-size Croquet set for 30s.; and their 60s. club box-wood set is one of the very best that can be obtained.

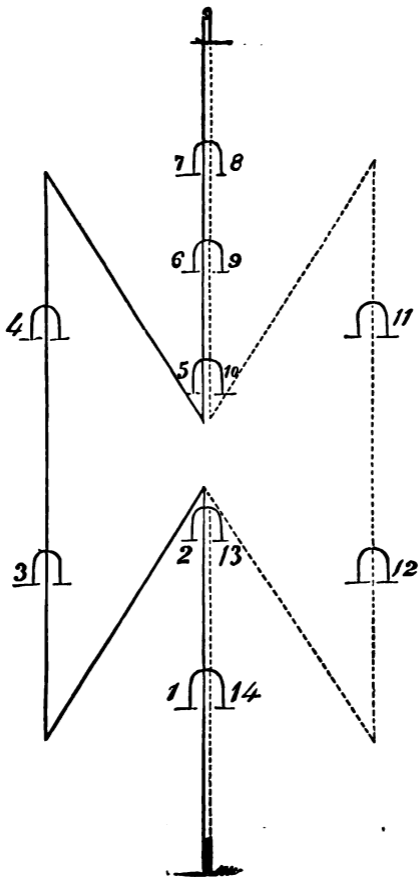
THE GROUND.

THE best ground for Croquet is a smooth-shaven lawn, perfectly level.

The "bridges" have to be arranged at certain fixed distances, and at each end of the ground a stake, point, or peg, must be erected. One of these, as already stated, from which the players play, is called the starting-point; the other, from which the players' balls begin their home journey, is called the turning-point.

Various arrangements are adopted in the distribution of the bridges. Here, in the diagram, we have an arrangement of the croquet-ground for nine bridges.

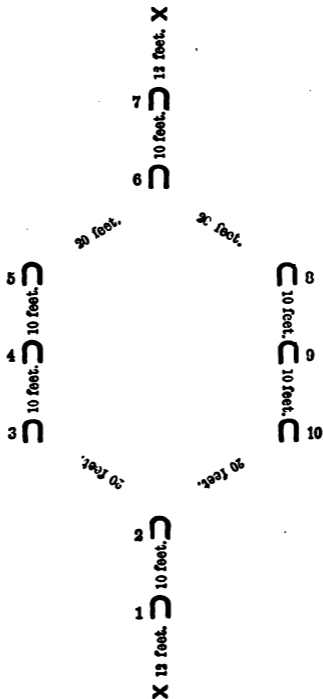
In the diagram on page 26 we have an arrangement for *ten* bridges. This arrangement, generally adopted by ordinary players, has been strongly objected to, on the ground that it offers no room for the display of that skill and tact which should be called forth in the progress of the game, and which a better adjustment of the bridges would ensure. There is no science required in going clean



Arrangement of Croquet-ground for Nine Bridges.

HAND-BOOK TO THE

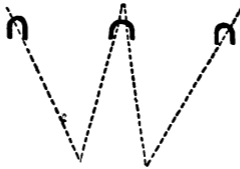
TURNING POINT.



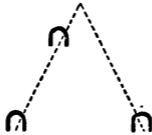
STARTING POINT.

Arrangement of Ground for Ten Bridges,

through an arch just opposite to you—very little to clear it diagonally; but to have to make for it thus—



is plainly more difficult than—



The *diagonal* arrangement, it is affirmed, is no arrangement at all—a mere capricious setting of the pieces, originally the whim, blindly followed and reduced to a custom, of some half-instructed Croquet player. The horizontal arrangement, on the other hand, is said to be laid out on philosophical principles, to be arranged for a definite purpose, and to bring about some of the most skilful play in the game.

“I shall be the better understood,” says a writer on this subject, “by explaining one of these advantages, and the most important of them—I refer to that feat of Croquet which I have elsewhere termed ‘turning the corners’—that is, passing from a flank bridge to a central one, or *vice versâ*, and missing one of each during the same tour of play. This is one of the prettiest performances in the game, requiring the exercise of great skill when the bridges are arranged as in the second diagram. Then a ‘corner’ can only be turned by the player making roquet upon another ball that chances to be lying in front of the bridge through which he desires to pass, or, by a still greater exhibition of skill, roqueting another ball so as to drive it into the desired position. It is the finest feat in Croquet. In the diagonal arrangement there is no such feat, or, at all events, its performance is so easy as to deprive it of all claim to credit. The corners may be turned *without* it, and *with* it any simpleton may get round them. For illustration, take the passage between bridge 2 to 3, the first corner encountered in the course of the game. By playing through bridge No. 1, to get well to the right, which the loose regulations about starting will enable you to do (though not ac-

ording to the 'Correct Treatise,' that requires you to start from the *spot*), and then making a similar sharp diagonal to the left, through bridge No. 2, you will find your ball in position for 3, and you may go through it without anything to detain you, and so on till you return to the starting-stake, and strike out if you like before any one else—either partner or competitor—has had the chance of using a mallet! It is true that to avoid this the toymakers have introduced a 'regulation' which tells you that you must stop at the turning-stake, even when your successful play has given you the right to go on! You are checked by an artificial law, to wait for those who are coming on behind you—in other words, an embargo is placed upon skill. And this is found necessary to accommodate the conditions of the diagonal arrangement."

TURNING POINT.



STARTING POINT.

THE PLAYERS.

IN Croquet, as in all other games, the players should be pretty equally well matched. Very little interest can by any possibility attach to a game wherein it is evident from the first which side must win.

Eight is the full number of players at Croquet.

It may be played by two, each player taking two balls; by three, each player taking two balls; by four, each player taking one or two balls; by five, four players taking but one ball each, and one player taking two. Six makes a very good game.

The two best players should, of course, be selected as chiefs, and the chiefs have the privilege of selecting partners. The best plan is for the chief on each side to select one partner only, the partner selecting another; and if eight players are to play, the third partner choosing the fourth. This, however, is a matter of detail which may be arranged on the ground.

As to first play, it is often arranged by chance.

This is never satisfactory, and often objectionable to some of the players.

Mayne Reid suggests the following plan. It is termed "striking for first play." It is accomplished thus:—

"One of the players on each side—the two chiefs should be the *strikers*—takes a ball, places it between the piers of bridge No. 1, and with a single blow of his mallet drives it in the direction of the starting-stake. His object is not to hit the stake, but to place his ball as near to it as possible. His antagonist follows with a similar intent; and when both have made their 'blow,' he whose ball lies nearest to the stake has won the right to lead off, or require the 'enemy' to do so, if he prefer this mode of making commencement.

"It may be said there is still 'chance' in this method of determining the start. He who strikes first is liable to have his ball driven out of place by that of the hostile chief coming after him; but the ball first played may also be *in the way* of the other, and impede its progress towards the stake."

This matter having been finally and satisfactorily arranged, the players prepare for their game, and here our advice is—

Play in earnest.

DON'T PLAY AT PLAYING.

"WHATEVER IS WORTH DOING IS WORTH DOING WELL."

"Partners" in the game of Croquet does not necessarily imply other players; it may refer only to other balls played by the same player, answering to the "dummy" in a game of cards. If two players only are playing, they must play with four balls, and the second ball in this instance becomes the partner.

It is quite necessary that when partners are really partners—that is, two distinct people—they should play for each other's interest, and "have faith in one another."

Miss Bremer, in one of her charming works, cautions young married people about not wasting all their love to-day, but to remember that there is "a to-morrow, and a day after to-morrow also." So would we say to young croquet players, Do not depend too much on your first stroke; don't fancy you will win because you begin by winning; don't try to do too much at once, and always bear and forbear with your partner.

Mind and not wrangle with your foes—we mean the opposition. Stick to your laws; uphold your constitution. If any dispute arise, refer it at once to the decision of the umpire.

The decision of the umpire is final; where no umpire is appointed, the opinion of the majority of the bystanders is to be taken in all points of dispute. It is, however, more satisfactory if it can be arranged to appoint an umpire. The duties of the umpire are to see that the game is played according to the rules; to decide upon the fairness of all balls struck; to measure wide balls; to restore balls disturbed by accident, &c., to their places; to place and arrange the clips; and before the commencement of the game, to decide with the players as to the start.

“A game is a competition between certain sides. If any individual join either side, he is bound to do his best for that side, not only to play as well as possible, but to pay proper attention to the *game*. There is nothing more annoying to the real player, and nothing which exhibits so much a want of real courtesy and good breeding, as to find a person taking a mallet and forming one of a side, and yet treating the game with such indifference as to converse with an outsider. If no interest is taken in a game, and conversation be preferred, then, in mercy to the players, let the talkers enjoy their talk, but do not let them spoil the amusement of others. A real player, under these circumstances, feels inclined to throw down his

mallet and walk away, rather than waste time in knocking about balls, for there can be no real game under these circumstances."

Attention to the game is certainly due to the other players; but for our own part we should not feel inclined to adopt so severe a course as that suggested by the indignant censor. We think it should be the duty of the umpire to keep order, to make all his players *play*, and to issue his mandate with Horse Guard authority—

ATTENTION !

Distance from the stake at point of starting. —This is a serious point; but from the manner in which it is dealt with by some players, it would appear to be regarded by them as optional. It must be obvious that this is a grand mistake. If it *were* optional with the player, he might place his ball close to the bridge, and drive it through readily enough. *It is not optional.* Now, some of the instruction books are guilty of the absurd error of assigning one foot as the distance—an arrangement which would not admit of the player freely using his mallet. At all events, the length of the mallet should be given, so that the player may have full swing. Two feet six inches is a convenient distance.

The order of sequence by colour is the best arrangement that can be adopted.

Rings of colour are usually painted, and should in *all* cases be painted on the stakes. These colours answer to the colour of the balls. Let the order there marked be the sequence observed in the game. It is easy of adjustment, admits of no dispute, and keeps before the eyes of all the players the order of play at any moment of the game—an advantage not to be attained by any other system. It is often important for a player to know who plays next, and it is often very difficult to remember. The stakes, even where clips are not used, convey the information.

GENERAL REMARKS.

THE best knowledge of Croquet is attained by practice. Those who are not free of the mallet can never by any instruction, however clearly conveyed, expect to make good play. At the same time, theoretical instruction is a positive advantage to the tyro in the game, as practice may be attained without often going into the croquet-ground. In Cricket it is no difficult matter to practise the cut—a very dashing stroke—with the simple use of the ball suspended by a piece of string in your own room; and the same sort of plan may be adopted with Croquet.

It will be found, as a general rule, more convenient to hold the mallet with one hand than with two. It is more elegant, and the stroke given is surer and firmer. It is very important to hold the mallet with a firm grasp; the arm should be kept straight, and when the sweep is given, the head of the mallet should just clear the ground. The swing should be given neither from the wrist nor from the elbow, but from

the shoulder. A full, direct, telling blow, given with steadiness of aim, and made in one un-



THE STRAIGHT STROKE.

broken sweep, is and must be effective. It is the *forced* force, the effort to do something

wonderful, the *careful*—really careless—players, who, with an exhibition of extraordinary power, strike so feebly and do so little.

But nobody can accomplish the proper swing, nor give the telling stroke, without attentive practice. It will be found useful to mark a line upon the floor—lay a piece of tape, for instance, straight on the carpet of your sitting-room—and practise till you can swing your mallet directly over it—a clean, even cut. And no amount of practice will do this without you stand in the right position. You must maintain an almost erect posture, your toes to the line, your shoulders a little bent, and in a line with the line—that is to say, with the swing of your mallet. You may have seen good strokes given without these precautions; they were happy hits, but not play. Play does not depend on chance; the player is as certain of his stroke, and of the effect it will produce, as a good oarsman is of *his* stroke in the water, or a good billiard player of his stroke with the cue.

Bad habits are always easily acquired; good habits may be acquired with the same ease. It is habit, irrespective of what is good or bad in it, that after a time becomes a second nature. A player who is careless as to what he is satisfied to call minor matters, will never be a good

player; it is only by attention to detail that correctness can be secured, and the habit of striking correctly, once formed, is as easy to maintain as the habit of striking carelessly. Says a writer on this subject: "Any ball that has to be struck may be driven correctly by the following plan: stand so that the toes of each foot are about four inches *behind* the ball; let the feet be separated about twelve inches, in order to stand firmly. *Take aim with the toes*, so that a straight line from the front of the right foot, through the front of the left, passes through the bridge or ball at which you are aiming. Then lean forward, so that your eyes are just above the ball, and swing the mallet, as before mentioned, once or twice, in order to obtain freedom of the arm; and take care that the shaft of the mallet is vertical, and therefore pointed towards the eyes at the instant the ball is struck. Let the mallet swing onwards as freely as it will go, and a true stroke and a true aim must follow these proceedings."

The height to which the mallet is raised, or rather the distance which it is removed from the ball before the stroke, is a matter of the utmost consequence. *On this depends the force of the blow given. On this, the propelling power,*

depends the distance which the ball is forced to travel. A thoughtless player, striking a ball, now drives it a yard, now four yards, and laughs at his ill or good luck, as if it were a matter of luck, and not of fixed scientific principle. The fact is, that a ball will go just as far and no farther than it is driven. The amount of momentum given depends on the distance which the mallet travels before it strikes the ball. A player may easily satisfy himself on this point. Say that the mallet is removed six inches from the ball, then swept towards it with a sharp clear stroke, the ball is driven forward to a certain length; the mallet is removed to twelve inches distance, and when the blow is given, the ball quadruples the distance it has before gone over. Just in proportion to the strength of the stroke is the ball propelled. Now as, in Croquet, striking your ball too far is often more disastrous to your game than not striking it far enough, a standard of strength—a test whereby you can ascertain the amount of strength required to drive a ball a certain given distance—is really of the utmost importance to the croquet player.

Practice, it is well said, makes perfect. Now there is no reason why a croquet player should not practise his strokes in his sitting-room. It

is nervous work to learn the rudiments of the game in the croquet-ground; many people give it up on this very account. This is a pity; let them practise with ball and mallet at home.

In speaking of the amount of strength which will propel a ball, three things have to be taken into consideration: first, the weight of your ball; second, the weight of your mallet; third, the nature of the ground. But all these are easily ascertained. A player new to the ground, and new to the implements (but not new to the game), should test the strength of his mallet and ball, and test the ground before he begins to play. A few trial balls will make him master of the situation.

As success in the game depends entirely on the correct use of the mallet, you cannot spend too much time in making yourself complete master of it. What is said of Cricket, that a player should never let a day pass without bowling three or four balls, is true of Croquet. A few spare minutes devoted to this exercise will not only help on to a better acquaintance with the game, but really serve as a healthy stimulant.

ROQUET AND CROQUET.

WE shall here offer a few words on the meaning of the terms so frequently employed in the game—*roquet* and *croquet*.



THE CROQUET,

In this game, a ball that is *struck* by another ball is said to be *roqueted*.



THE ROQUET.

To *croquet* a ball, the player puts his own ball close to the one he has struck, so that

both balls touch. He then places his foot on his own ball, and strikes it with his mallet—or he may, if he pleases, strike the ball without putting his foot on it. He may use any degree of strength he pleases in croqueting a ball, and is at liberty to send it in any direction. To make a hard stroke, it is best to bear lightly with your toe on your ball; and to cause your own ball to follow the one struck, you should hit high, with a kind of flowing motion of the arm.

In roqueting, two different plans must be adopted, just as the ball to be roqueted belongs to a friend or a foe. It seems no unnatural suggestion, that of hitting a foe hard; you don't care where you send him to, so long as it is not in his right direction; but in roqueting a friend, strike softly; if your roquet fails, your friend has your friendly ball adjacent to help himself on with.

“BOOBIES.”

So-called “boobies” are those balls which fail to pass the first bridge. The rule adopted in this case varies, some insisting that the player shall play, when it comes to his turn again, from the spot to which he has driven his

ball; if he has driven it beyond the first bridge without passing through it, he is to strike it back again, towards the starting-point; if he has driven only to the one side or the other, still within the barrier formed by the first bridge, he must play from thence, however disadvantageous his position may be, and how disastrous to himself and partners the consequences may be. Other authorities maintain that the ball should be taken up and re-played from the starting-point. This arrangement, in point of play, gives an encouragement to a skilful player to make a booby of his ball at the first outset—that is to say, supposing he has to play first ball; if other balls, over-hasty in their zeal to win, should reach his enclosure before he plays, he may play at them and create confusion, or he may have three or four friendly balls to help him on. They depend for ultimate success upon his success, just as he depends for ultimate success upon their success. It is altogether a mutual business, and should be worked in concert.

“ROVERS.”

A player having passed the last bridge on the home voyage, can of course make for the

starting-point, and drop anchor. But he is not obliged to do so: he may become a "rover," and as a rover he may do good service to his friends, and make havoc with their foes; still, he must so far secure himself as to be able to get out at the right time. It does not do, even for friendship's sake, to be too adventurous. Gold, it is said, may be bought too dear; and gallant actions may be sometimes continued a little too long for the safety and well-being of the hero. A croquet player, while serving his friends, should not forget to secure himself. There is a short and easy way, sometimes, of dealing with a troublesome rover. By a judiciously-applied stroke he may be sent down to the starting-point, and croqueted out. Some players consider that to strike an adversary out is "*mean* play," but it is often the right game, and is like playing the back game at backgammon, or making baulk at billiards.

"The defence to this attack is for no ball to pass the last bridge, or perhaps the two last, whilst some of its friends are very backward—that is, to defer becoming a rover until all the friends are near together; for it is far more difficult to send a ball through two hoops, and then strike it out, than it is merely to strike it out when it is a rover."

Keeping friendly balls well together is one of the great secrets of success in Croquet. Never scatter your balls: keep all well together on one side. If it be your turn to play, and your chance of passing a bridge doubtful, do not lose an opportunity of helping on your side by a doubtful attempt to exhibit skill, and a possible chance of giving your foes a lift; rather accept your position as subordinate, and play so as to send your ball close to a friend, thus giving your friend a chance of helping himself on. Every stroke requires consideration. First, you must be watchful as to the play of your friends, as well as of your foes; you must, secondly, remember who plays after you, and who follows after the second player. Only in this way can you make certain as to what you should do, and what effect your stroke is likely to have on the same.

Never be over-hasty about a roquet: it may be advisable, and it may be the very reverse. Consider well what you are about to do, and all the contingencies attending it, before you make your stroke. In striking, also, for a roquet, consider what sort of stroke you should give. If to roquet a friend, let the ball be sent slowly: if it fail to roquet, still your friend has a ball to help him on; if to roquet a foe, strike well

home, so as to hit hard, or, if your ball miss, that it may drive far away from the foe. The best strokes, as a rule, are those which get yourself, or your side, at all events, in good position for the bridges; so that, supposing you are not knocked out by your foes, you may shoot the arch at the next stroke. But all this depends on practice; and every player should look well to the position of the other balls before he strikes.

There are players (?) who seem to play for nothing else but shooting the bridges: such players are almost sure to be beaten. Truly, you must shoot through every arch before you get home, but this is not to be done without caution. Only playing for this may bring you to "grief" early in the game. Your game is not won by an occasional good stroke, but by systematic play—play with forethought in it, enlivened here and there by a dashing stroke. After passing the first hoop, the player is fairly in the game for roquet and croquet—something very different, and far more scientific, than the mere shooting of the bridges.

Croquet, when played by more than two, demands some amount of self-denial. It is not enough for one good player to show that he is such by running the bridges, croqueting his

D

foes, hitting the turning-stake, and getting out with marvellous celerity: this will not win the game for his partners. He must play up to them, play to their advantage, lose many a good stroke to suit their play, and humour them in all sorts of ways, stopping in the game much longer than, if he acted on his own responsibility, he need stop, just to make success the easier and the surer for them.

THE LAWS OF CROQUET.

THE following synopsis of the laws of Croquet will be found useful :—

1. The players on each side must follow each other in rotation; No. 1 on one side being followed by No. 1 on the other side.

2. Each player must place his ball at starting within a yard of the starting-post, either to the right or the left.

3. The player may stand in any position he pleases, and strike his ball with the head of the mallet, but not *push* it.

4. Any player missing the first hoop must take up his ball and play again from the starting-post.

5. Each player continues to play so long as he strikes his ball through the hoop next in order, or hits another ball.

6. A player who hits another ball with his own (which is termed *roquet*), has the right to play again, either by *taking the croquet*, or by continuing his game, as he pleases.

7. In taking the croquet, the player's foot

may be either placed *firmly* on his ball, so that it remains stationary while the other flies off; or *lightly*, so that it follows the ball croqueted, or turns off at an angle.

8. The player who croquets a ball must move it from its position.

9. A player having made roquet, and declined to take the croquet, must continue his game from the spot at which his ball stopped, or from the side of the ball which it struck.

10. A player may croquet any number of balls in succession, but he cannot croquet the same ball twice during the same turn, unless he first passes through the hoop next in order.

11. No ball can croquet another, or be croqueted, until it has passed through the first hoop.

12. A player who roquets two balls with one stroke, may croquet them both, one after the other.

13. A ball which is either roqueted or croqueted through the hoop next in order, is considered to have passed that hoop.

14. A ball has passed its hoop when it cannot be touched by the handle of the mallet laid straight against the wires behind it.

15. A player may strike his ball in any direction he pleases, without aiming either at his

hoop or at another ball. But in this case he must, of course, go through his proper hoop, at a future stroke, before he can progress in the game.

16. A player must hit the turning-post with his ball, and then he is entitled to continue his game as if he had passed through a hoop.

17. When a player, after going through all the hoops, has hit the starting-peg, his turn is finished, and the play continues without him until the game is won.

18. When every player on one side has completed his turn, that side has won the game.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE RULES.

1. *Follow in Rotation.*—This must be previously arranged, or the colour of the balls may settle the question of precedence. It is very usual, as already noticed, to have the colour painted on the stakes, and in this case no question can arise as to precedence in play; besides, it serves to show, all through the game, who is the next player, and avoids all troublesome inquiry.

3. Sometimes very stringent regulations are laid down as to the position which a player *must not* assume. As the things forbidden—apparently as giving the player an undue advantage—are really calculated to injure his play, the best plan is to allow of perfect freedom. The only essential point is that the ball must be set in motion by a *stroke*, not a push, from the mallet.—*Not Push.* That is to say, it will not be considered a stroke if you simply push your mallet forward. The stroke on the ball is considered fair if it can be heard. The mallet must be fairly drawn back before the stroke, to

make the hit fairly. It is, however, allowable to rest the head of the mallet on the turf, and then suddenly advance it to the ball.

4. This first stroke is called "making the hoop." This is sometimes disputed; and it is held by many players that the ball which fails to shoot the first hoop should be played from the point to which it has been driven. It is an important question which should be clearly settled for the game in hand, before the play begins. [See Art. "Boobies."]

5. *Each Player continues to Play, &c.*—A player missing a hoop, or failing to strike another ball, must allow his ball to remain where it is. He has no choice in the matter—no ball must be touched or moved in any direction from the point to which it has been driven by the stroke of the player, or by the roquet or croquet of another ball.

6. *A Player who hits another Ball.*—This is a rule on which great difference of opinion has existed among authorities on the subject. Some have contended that a player in such a case is bound to take the croquet, and others have just as decidedly laid down that he may decline the croquet, if he thinks it judicious to do so. The rule we have here given appears, from all that has been advanced upon the subject, to

be the best, and we advise our readers to adopt it.

7. *In taking the Croquet, the Player's Foot, &c.*—Here, again, it is a point in dispute whether the player has a right to move his own ball at all, in taking the croquet; but the remark we have made on the previous rule applies also to this. The rules, however, here given have been approved by most experienced players.

8. *The Player who Croquets, &c.*—If you wish to leave the roqueted ball in the place where it stands, you must touch it lightly with your own ball—just sufficient to move it. This is called “taking the stroke off.”

9. *A Player having made Roquet and Declined, &c.*—It is necessary to bear this in mind, as there are some players who invariably insist upon it that the player *must* croquet. It is really optional. This should be understood on both sides before the game begins.

10. *A Player may Croquet, &c.*—This rule is so plain as to require no comment.

11. The ball which has not passed the first bridge cannot be croqueted either by a ball that has or has not passed the bridge. Neither can it roquet or be roqueted. It is simply *doing nothing*, in the full sense of the expression.

12. *A Player who Roquets Two Balls, &c.*—

In this case the player must be careful to croquet the balls in the order in which they were struck. In this, or in any other point of the game, a ball played out of turn must be replaced in its old position, or left in the one to which it has been driven, the choice being left to the *adverse* party. But the adverse party must point out the misplaced ball before another stroke is made, otherwise the objection must be disallowed. A ball played by a wrong player subjects the ball to the same forfeit as though played out of turn, with this exception—a ball played out of turn loses its tour of play; this is not enforced when played by a wrong player.

13. *A Ball which is either Roqueted, &c.*—Certain privileges are occasionally allowed for good play, and in this way interest is added to the game. Thus, when a ball has shot two bridges by one blow of the mallet, it is sometimes allowed the privilege, or is granted the reward, of being moved a mallet's length in any direction. If three bridges are passed by one stroke, two mallets' length may be allowed. Where such rewards are not allowed, a clumsy stroke may often tell more to the advantage of a player than a good stroke.

14. *A Ball has Passed its Hoop, &c.*—This rule is subject to occasional modifications; but

the exact distance should be defined before the commencement of the game.

15. *A Player may Strike his Ball.*—Attention to this rule is very important; *all* the hoops must be passed in rotation.

16. *A Player must hit the Turning-stake with his Ball, &c.*—If a player stop at the turning-stake, he loses his turn, and the stroke does not count. Even though he may have roqueted the ball off the peg, when his turn arrives he must start from the place at which his ball stopped.

17. *When a Player, &c.*—The player who has made the complete circuit of the hoops—from the starting-peg round the turning-peg, and back again through the last hoop—may either retire from the game by hitting the starting-peg, or else become a rover, by avoiding hitting this peg for a time. A rover has the privilege of croqueting all the balls, during any one of his turns for play; but of course he only takes his turn in regular order. A rover is very often of great assistance to his friends in croqueting away their opponents, and so allowing the rest of his party to get on towards the goal.

18. *When every Player, &c.*—The side which first makes the round completely wins the game. Sometimes points are scored for first hoop, second hoop, &c., but this is not necessary.

We need scarcely caution our readers against the impropriety of playing Croquet for money : it is an evil practice, which should not be tolerated. Making bets on the game is also most objectionable.

TECHNICAL TERMS.

Roquet.—To hit another ball with your own.

Croquet.—When two balls are in contact, the player placing his foot on his own ball, while he strikes the other away.

Wired.—When a ball is in contact with a hoop, so as to prevent its going through.

A Bridge Ball.—A ball that has passed the first arch.

A Dead Ball.—One that is in hand after having roqueted another.

To Peg.—To play for either of the pegs in regular order.

The Tour.—The run given to each player till he fails to strike through a hoop.

To Dismiss a ball is to Croquet it to a distance.

The terms side stroke, straight stroke, following ball, over-running a bridge, running a bridge, &c., sufficiently explain themselves.

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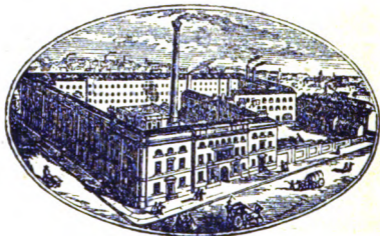
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